DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 205 636 UD 021 548

AUTHOR McInnis, Kathleen M.
TITLE Secondary Migration Among the Indochinese: The Wisconsin Study.
PUB DATE [81]
NOTE 20p.; For a related document, see UD 021 500. Not available in paper copy due to author's restriction.

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS *Asian Americans; Family Characteristics; *Indochinese; *Migration Patterns; *Refugees; *Relocation; *Socioeconomic Status
IDENTIFIERS Michigan; *Wisconsin

ABSTRACT

A demographic study was conducted to examine the secondary migration rate of 782 Indochinese families resettled by the Lutheran Social Services of Wisconsin and upper Michigan between May 1975 and October 1980. Although 18 percent of the families were found to have left their original location of resettlement, this rate is lower than the mobility rate of Americans in general. The highest rates of migration occured among refugees who were classified as unskilled and who had been resettled in communities with a population of less than 11,000 persons. Factors which correlate with higher rates of migration among the general American population include higher levels of education and skill among the head of a household, a younger family and lack of a family support system in the area of out-migration. These factors were not statistically significant, however, in the migration of the refugees studied. The results of the study suggest a number of implications for voluntary agencies that assist refugee families and their sponsors. (Author/APM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED205636

SECONDARY MIGRATION AMONG THE INDOCHINESE:

THE WISCONSIN STUDY

BY

KATHLEEN M. MCINNIS, ACSW

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF SOCIAL WORK
MARQUETTE UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY, ANTHROPOLOGY AND SOCIAL WORK
MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN 53233

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Kathleen M. McInnis

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

UD021548

ABSTRACT

Secondary migration, or the moving of a refugee family from the place of original resettlement, may have serious emotional and practical consequences for the refugee family, the voluntary agency working with the family and the sponsor. In a demographic study conducted by Lutheran Social Services of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan, of 482 Indochinese families resettled between May 1975 and October 1980, 18% of the families had left their original location of resettlement. This rate is lower than the mobility rate of Americans in general. The highest rates of migration occurred among those refugees who were classified as unskilled and who had been resettled in communities with a total population of less than 11,000 persons. The factors which correlate with higher rates of migration among the general American population are higher levels of education and skill among the head of household, a younger family and a lack of family support system in the area of out-migration. These factors were not statistically significant in the migration of the refugees studied.

Suggestions are given for voluntary agencies and sponsors to assist them in working with both the refugee families and their sponsors. The concept of migration to the refugee and the influence of their family structure are given special attention, with the focus of assisting agencies to retain experienced sponsors for future sponsorships.

SECONDARY MIGRATION AMONG THE INDOCHINESE: THE WISCONSIN STUDY

For those working with Indochinese refugees, the incidence of secondary migration remains a serious concern. Secondary migration is broadly defined as the movement of a refugee family from their original place or resettlement with an individual or congregational sponsor to another location, most often without a sponsor. This migration may occur within or across state boundaries. This phenomena has widespread reverberations for the refugee family, the sponsors and the voluntary agency working with the resettlement process. (1)

For the refugee family, the move from the original placement may impede the process of assimilation and integration into American society. Each time a refugee family moves, the process of adjusting to the employment, community and social environment begins again. Their sense of security and permanence may be delayed once more. Yet the move may also be a sign of healthy independence for the family. They may be reunited with family members whose presence and support are invaluable in promoting the adjustment of the family. In addition, the move may facilitate upward occupational mobility.

For the sponsor, whether an individual or a congregation, the move often causes feelings of disillusionment and disappointment. Sponsors may blame the refugee families for being unappreciative of their efforts and bitterness may lead to the unwillingness of the sponsors to consider sponsoring another family. However, the sponsor may also view the move as a sign of independence and growth and their feelings of disappointment may stem from a genuine sense of loss.

How the sponsors react to the migration has serious consequences for the voluntary agencies working with the refugees awaiting placement. A community's refusal to sponsor another family and the transmission of this negative attitude to potential sponsoring congregations in the area can make recruitment a difficult and frustrating process. This resistance compounded by the negative media coverage of other political refugees and the general recessionary economic period has resulted in a drop in sponsorships in some areas.

Secondary migration, therefore, has both its positive and negative ramifications. The fact remains that the decision to move is a right guaranteed the refugee families by their legal status as resident aliens. It is a civil liberty which the U.S. Government, resettlement workers and sponsors have the obligation to protect. Even though the responsibility for informing the families of the consequences of the move belongs to the resettlement worker, any effort to influence the family's decision, on the basis of real or perceived force, is a serious violation in the family's right to self-determination.

Existing labor mobility studies offer only a preliminary basis of comparison for understanding why the refugee families migrate as compared with the general American population. Sources vary in their estimations of the number of Americans who move within a given period of time and the reasons given for the move. The Lansing-Mueller studies indicate that approximately 19.4% of Americans move within a one year period of time and 47.3% move within a five year period (Lansing and Mueller, 1967). These figures are supported by U.S. Census statistics (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1966, 1978, 1979).

These studies indicate that the highest rates of migration, within and outside state boundaries, occur among younger families, those with college educations and those highly trained. The reasons given for the move include in order of frequency, employment, desire to be closer to family and climate.

THE WISCONSIN STUDY

The Data Base

The actual incidence of secondary migration, the reasons given by refugee families to sponsors and agencies for the move, and the destination of the refugee families was the focus of a study of Indochinese refugees resettled by Lutheran Social Services of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan (LSS). Data were drawn from the cases of 482 families, consisting of 2,115 individual refugees who had been resettled between May 1975 and October 1980. These randomly selected cases represent approximately 85% of the total number of refugee families resettled by LSS. Information was gathered by coding directly from the biographical sheets completed in the refugee camps and verified by case records which had been completed by sponsors and resettlement workers after the family's arrival. The following information was gathered for all families: national background, length of time in the refugee camp, sex of the principal applicant, number of members in the family unit, number of family members under 5 years of age at the time of processing in the refugee camps, occupation of the principal applicant, level of education of the principal applicant, presence of a relative in the original area of resettlement and the reason for migration and destination of the move if given.

Reflecting existing theoretical constructs regarding the characteristics of migrating Americans, it was hypothesized that refugee migration patterns

would be the same. It was predicted that there would be significantly higher levels of secondary migration among those families with principal applicants having higher levels of education, higher levels of skills, and younger families. (2) It was also predicted the reasons given for migration would be most frequently employment related, followed frequently by a desire to be close to family and the desire for a different climate.

THE FINDINGS

Eighteen percent of the refugee population moved between May 1975 and October 1980, with the remaining 82% still living in the communities in which they were originally placed. This figure is lower than the national annual average of Americans in general according to U.S. Census figures (1978, 1979). The mean time in resettlement camps prior to resettlement was 17.3 months but the length of time in resettlement camps did not significantly correlate with the incidence of secondary migration. The size of the family and the sex of the principal applicant also did not correspond with significantly higher or lower rates of secondary migration.

The greatest number of refugees identified their occupations as being either farmer or soldier (48.5 percent). Refugees with skilled occupations including plumbers, tailors, electricians, and craftsmen comprised 19 percent of the sample. Eighteen percent of the refugees were classified as unskilled, which included those who had never worked or were employed as laborers in their native countries.

Twenty-four percent of the refugees studied had no formal education but 28% of these refugees were literate in at least one language. Forty percent of the refugees had completed at least a primary education with 24% having completed secondary education. Only 8% of the population studied had attended college.

Cases were often assigned to LSS on the basis of relatives living in the state of Wisconsin which accounts for 70% of the refugees being placed near relatives. "Being placed near relatives" was interpreted as being placed within 10 miles of the relative. One third of the refugees resettled in communities with a total population of 11,000 persons or less and 28% resettled in large urban areas of 100,000 persons or more, specifically Milwaukee or Madison. (See Appendix A for Statistical Summary)

In a cross tabulation of education and the incidence of secondary migration, education did not appear to significantly correspond with the incidence of secondary migration (Chi Square 1.38. d.f. = 4. Significance = .848). Although college educated refugees showed a slightly higer rate of migration and technical school-educated refugees showed a slightly lower rate of migration, neither was statistically significant.

The proxy chosen to indicate the age of the family was the number of children under five years of age at the time the family was processed in the refugee camp. Only five of the 482 cases studied consisted of couples of childbearing age without children. If children had been born into families since their arrival in the United States, these children were included in the statistical calculations. Families with three or more children under the age of five showed a slightly higher tendency to migrate but not a statistically significant level (Significance = .195). Initial placement in areas where relatives were living did not significantly correspond with the level of migration. This indicates that placement near relatives is not an assurance that secondary migration will not occur. The particular relatives in the resettlement may be more important than simply relatives in general.

Occupational Classification

Occupational classification appeared to be the significant factor corresponding with the incidence of secondary migration among the refugees in this study. As Table One indicates, the highest level of secondary migration occurred among unskilled workers. This is in direct contradiction to the theories of American labor mobility which cite the highest levels of migration among those workers who are highly trained (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1978, 1979; Lansing and Mueller, 1967). For the refugee workers, even the lowest paying jobs may provide them with a standard of living far superior to that known in Southeast Asia, but custodial and maintenance jobs may seen as frustrating and boring to the refugee as they are at times to American workers. This is especially true when the refugee perceives him/herself to be underemployed. The initial job placement may be seen as a step towards better employment opportunities in the future. (3) Low level skill jobs are often those which are most subject to the employment fluctuation present in an economic recession. These factors may contribute to the explanation of the surprising results of unskilled labor migration.

In looking more closely at unskilled workers who migrated, it becomes apparent that the size of the community of original placement corresponds most closely with the incidence of secondary migration as indicated in Table Two.

The highest levels of migration occurred among those unskilled workers who had been resettled in communities with a total population of under 11,000. In addition to limited job opportunities in small towns, the lack of other minorities may have an effect on secondary migration, a factor which needs to be explored in future studies.

Table One

Incidence of Secondary Migration
by Occupational Classification of Principal Applicant

Occupation	Number of Nonmigrating Families	Number of Migrating Families	Total
Farmer	83 (87.37%)	12 (12.63%)	95
Skilled worker	70 (81.40%)	16 (18.60%)	86
Unskilled worker	64 (70.33%)	27 (29.67%)	91
Technical and clerical	26 (86.67%)	4 (13.33%)	30
Management and professional	32 (80.00%)	8 (20.00%)	40
Other *	118 (85.51%)	20 (14.49%)	138
Total	393	87	480

Number of missing observations = 2 Chi-Square = 11.90 d.f. = 5 Significance = .3612

*This category included those who described their own occupation levels as that of soldier or student and who did not possess a level of skill applicable to any other category.

Table Two

Incidence of Secondary Migration Among Unskilled Workers
by Total Population of the Community of Original Settlement

Population of Sponsorship Location *	Number of Nonmigrating Families	Number of Migrating Families	Total
100,000 +	22 (81.48%)	5 (18.52%)	27
11,000 to 99,999	30 (75.00%)	10 (25.00)	40
10,999 and under	12 (50.00%)	12 (50.00%)	24
Total	64 (70.33%)	27 (29.67%)	91

Chi-square = 6.680 d.f. = 2 Significance = .03370

*Sponsorship locations have been collapsed because of the small number in each cell. These categories most accurately reflect the three divisions of urban communities in the state of Wisconsin. Madison and Milwaukee are the only cities with populations over 100,000.

Reasons Given for Migration

Only 59 of the 87 families migrating gave specific reasons to their sponsors or sponsoring agencies for their migration. The remaining families either gave no reason or left without notifying their sponsors so that no reason was known. In observing the reasons given, most frequently mentioned was that of a desire to be near family, regardless of whether the family had been originally settled near other family members. As previously mentioned, it appears to be important which family members the refugee family is resettled near. This differs from the most frequently given reason by Americans being that of employment (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1979). For the refugee family, employment related-reasons were the second most frequently given reasons, followed by climate and difficulty with sponsors and communities.

The destination of the move was given in only 46 of the 87 cases of secondary migration. Most frequently mentioned was California followed by Minnesota, Texas, and other southern locations were next in frequency as destinations of migration.

In reviewing the results of this study, it became apparent to those working with refugee families that migration patterns of the refugee families do not fit the pattern of the general American labor force. The rate of migration is lower than the yearly rate of Americans and the reasons given for the move are different. The usual factors which tend to indicate higher rates of migration being higher education, younger family, higher level of skills were statistically significant in their correspondence with the incidence of secondary migration. Although the desire to be near family was the most frequently given reason for migration, refugee families appear

to have preferences about which family members. Initial placement of a refugee family near relatives is no assurance that secondary migration will not occur.

There are several limitations of this study which must be noted. The study dealt with a relatively small refugee population, resettled by one agency in one state. Wisconsin has few minorities outside of metropolitan areas. Rural areas of Wisconsin often times offer limited job opportunities which may have had a strong effect on the results of this study. But these findings do offer a preliminary basis of comparison for beginning the development of better understanding the phenomena of secondary migration.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SPONSORS AND VOLUNTARY AGENCIES

The rate of secondary migration among the refugee population in this study surprised those working with the resettlement program. It was perceived by resettlement workers to be much higher than indicated in this study. Because the reverberations of a single family migrating can be so intense, emotionally and practically for the sponsor and the agency, its perception as a large scale problem may be primarily in the amount of frustration that resettlement workers experience in working with a disappointed sponsor. The fact that making the decision to move to another location, for whatever, reasons, is a fundamental civil liberty must be foremost in the minds of all those involved in the resettlement program. This study did not address the implications of migration on the "receiving" area which no-doubt are more serious, particularly if the refugees migrate to particular areas in large numbers, as appears to be the case in California.

Secondly, employment appears to be a considerable concern for the

refugee leaving primarily rural areas. If refugees are placed in low level jobs and not provided training for higher level jobs, then it is readily apparent that this refugee family is a high risk family for secondary migration. This fact must be presented to the sponsor when preparing for the arrival of the family but also must be prepared for the possibility of the family leaving when the employment opportunities are limited in a community.

A third implication, primarily for those sponsors in rural areas is perhaps a redefinition of the role of sponsoring congregations in rural areas. Recruitment workers often find that rural communities may be more successful as recruitment areas because of a strong sense of community in smaller congregations. These also may be the best sponsorships in terms of congregational and community support. Realistically, however, placement in such areas may not be perceived by the refugee family as a final placement. If congregations can see their role as one part of the total process of assimilation, the entire sponsorship experience may be more positive and secondary migration less stressful for both the refugee family and the sponsor.

The actual meaning of migration presents a fourth implication for sponsors and agencies. Although referred to as "secondary migration" by resettlement workers, it most often is the case that refugee families have moved several times in the process of leaving their native countries, even prior to arriving in resettlement camps. This experience of constantly moving may make it difficult for the family to develop strong community ties, especially among those with whom they do not share a cultural heritage. The refugees may see their original placement locations as one more stop

on the way to a permanent home. This perception of moving must be explained and understood as part of the preparation of the congregation for the sponsorship experience.

Fifth, the entire Indochinese concept of family support systems strongly affects the decision of a family to migrate and some attempt to understand that concept must be made by both sponsors and agencies. Its complicated structure and emotional significance for the refugee are just beginning to be studied, but it clearly presents a drawing force that must be recognized and honored.

Finally, it is important that the positive aspects of secondary migration also be discussed with sponsors. The move may indeed be a sign of independence and an opportunity for a refugee family to improve their occupational status. It may well provide the necessary family support system for the refugee to complete the assimilation process, while preserving their cultural heritage. The attitude toward secondary migration projected by the agencies and resettlement workers may set the tone for the actual reaction of the sponsors.

These suggestions may represent an ideal but dealing with the consequences of migration with sponsors prior to the actual fact could play an important role in retaining enthusiastic and experienced sponsors in the refugee resettlement program and lessening the physical and emotional strain often experienced due to secondary migration.

NOTES

1. The effects of secondary migration on the refugee family, the sponsors and the resettlement agencies are the observations of resettlement workers and sponsors interviewed in this project and those of the author. The author is particularily thankful to Ms. Patricia A. Cole, Sponsorship Coordinator at Lutheran Social Services of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan, for her observations and comments.
2. Principal applicants are those so designated by refugee camp workers. Sometimes the principal applicant was the head of household and other times it was the wife in a two parent family older family member or older child.
3. For further information on the theory of spontaneous migration and the effect of employment on migration among refugees see: Montero, Darrell, "Vietnamese Refugees in America: Toward a Theory of Spontaneous International Migration," International Migration Review, 13, n. 4:634-648.

REFERENCES

Indichina Refugee Action Center, "Statistical Update on the Indochina Refugee Situation," 1025 Fifteenth St. N.W. Suite 600, Washington, D.C. September 24, 1980.

Lansing, John B. and Mueller, Eva, The Geographic Mobility of Labor, Ann Arbor, Michigan: Survey Research Center, 1967

Long, Larry H. "The Influence of Number and Ages of Children on Residential Mobility," Demography 9:August 1972:371-382.

_____"Migration Differentials by Education and Occupation: Trends and Variations," Demography 10:May 1973: 243-258.

Montero, Darrell, "Vietnamese Refugees in America: Toward A Theory of Spontaneous International Migration," International Migration Review 13, No. 4:634-648.

Stein, Barry, "Occupational Adjustment of Refugees: The Vietnamese in the United States." International Migration Review 13, No. 1:25-45.

U.S. Bureau of the Census "Reasons for Moving: March 1962 to March 1963." Current Population Reports, Series P-20, no. 154, Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1966.

_____, "Geographical Mobility, March 1975 to March 1977," Current Population Reports, Series P-20, no. 320, Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1978.

_____,"Housing Characteristics of Recent Movers for the U.S. and Regions," Current Housing Reports,Series H-150-76, Washington C.D.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1978.

_____,"Reasons for Interstate Migration: Jobs, Retirement Climate and Other Reasons," Current Population Reports, Special Series P-23, N. 81, Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1979.

APPENDIX A: SUMMARY STATISTICS

Indochinese Refugees Resettled by Lutheran Social Services 1975 - 1980

DATA SOURCE: 482 cases (2,115 individuals) of Indochinese heritage resettled by Lutheran Social Services of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan from April 1975 through October 1980 Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding off.

NATIONALITY	NUMBER	PERCENT OF TOTAL
Vietnamese	186	38.6
Laotian	152	31.5
Cambodian	21	4.4
Laotian-Hmong	119	24.7
Other	4	.8
TOTAL	482	100.00

LENGTH OF TIME IN REFUGEE CAMP	NUMBER	PERCENT OF TOTAL	
0 - 5 months	111	23.08	
6 - 10	83	17.26	
11 - 15	106	22.04	
16 - 20	50	10.04	
21 - 25	16	3.33	
26 - 30	7	1.46	Mean = 17.83
31 - 35	15	3.12	Median = 12.18
36 - 40	14	2.91	St. Dev. = 16.07
41 - 45	30	6.24	
46 - 50	21	4.37	
51 - 55	17	3.53	1 Missing
56 - 60	10	2.08	Observation
61 - 65	1	.21	
	481	99.79	

SEX OF PRINCIPAL APPLICANT	NUMBER	PERCENT OF TOTAL
Male	416	86.3
Female	66	13.7
	482	100.00

NUMBER OF FAMILY MEMBERS	NUMBER	PERCENT OF TOTAL
1	88	18.2
2	55	11.4
3	63	13.1
4	58	12.0
5	57	11.8

APPENDIX A CONTINUED:

NUMBER OF FAMILY MEMBERS	NUMBER	PERCENT OF TOTAL
6	49	10.2
7	44	9.1
8	33	6.8
9	20	4.1
10	6	1.2
11	5	1.0
12	2	.4
13	2	.4
	482	100.00

Mean = 4.39
Median = 4.10
St. Dev. = 2.67

OCCUPATION	NUMBER	PERCENT OF TOTAL
Farmer	95	19.79
Skilled	86	17.92
Unskilled	91	18.96
Technical and Clerical	30	6.25
Management and Professional	40	8.33
Other	138	28.75
	482	100.00

EDUCATION	NUMBER	PERCENT OF TOTAL
No formal education	121	25.95
Elementary or some elementary	191	39.71
Secondary or some secondary	115	23.91
College	40	8.32
Vocational Prep	15	3.12
	482	100.00

KNOWLEDGE OF ENGLISH	NUMBER	PERCENT OF TOTAL
No	308	63.9
Yes	173	35.9
NA	1	.2
	482	100.00

EXISTENCE OF HEALTH PROBLEM	NUMBER	PERCENT OF TOTAL
No	459	95.2
Yes-Parent	11	2.3
Yes-Child	8	1.7
Yes-Older Adult	4	.2
	482	100.00

APPENDIX A CONTINUED:

PREGNANCY STATUS	NUMBER	PERCENT OF TOTAL
Not pregnant	461	95.6
Pregnant	21	4.1
	482	100.00

Note: Most families had to wait until after the birth of the child before they could be resettled in the United States.

RELATIVES IN AREA	NUMBER	PERCENT OF TOTAL
Yes	334	70.1
No	144	29.9
Unknown	4	1.0
	482	100.00

SPONSORSHIP LOCATION (by population)	NUMBER	PERCENT OF TOTAL
100,000 +	158	32.5
25,000 to 99,999	103	21.4
11,000 to 24,999	55	11.4
Under 11,000	167	34.6
	482	100.00

SECONDARY MIGRATION	NUMBER	PERCENT OF TOTAL
No	394	81.91
Yes	87	18.09
NA	1	
	482	100.00